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**HIDE AND SEEK**

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**CHRISTOPHER MORLEY**

*Books By*  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

HIDE AND SEEK

THE ROCKING HORSE

SONGS FOR A LITTLE HOUSE

MINCE PIE

PARNASSUS ON WHEELS

SHANDYGAFF

THE HAUNTED BOOKSHOP



# HIDE AND SEEK

BY  
*John Mistletoe*  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

*“There be some whose pleasure is to seek Truth;  
others whose merriment is to hide her or trick her  
out in freakish guise. Of both sorts much may  
be said; yet meseems that a man may well speak  
plain sooth at times.”*

—JOHN MISTLETOE.



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TO H. F. M.

A SONNET IN SUNLIGHT

**T**HIS IS a day for sonnets: Oh how clear  
Our splendid cliffs and summits lift the gaze—  
If all the perfect moments of the year  
Were poured and gathered in one sudden blaze,  
Then, then perhaps, in some endowed phrase  
My flat, strewn words would rise and come more near  
To tell of you. Your beauty and your praise  
Would fall like sunlight on this paper here.

Then I would build a sonnet that would stand  
Proud and perennial on this pale bright sky;  
So tall, so steep, that it might stay the hand  
Of Time, the dusty wrecker. He would sigh  
To tear my strong words down. And he would say:  
“That song he built for her, one summer day.”



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PART ONE: VERSES

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### TAKING TITLE

**T**O make this house my very own  
Could not be done by law alone.  
Though covenant and deed convey  
Absolute fee, as lawyers say,  
There are domestic rites beside  
By which this house is sanctified.

By kindled fire upon the hearth,  
By planted pansies in the garth,  
By food, and by the quiet rest  
Of those brown eyes that I love best,  
And by a friend's bright gift of wine,  
I dedicate this house of mine.

When all but I are soft abed  
I trail about my quiet stead  
A wreath of blue tobacco smoke  
(A charm that evil never broke)

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HIDE AND SEEK

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TAKING TITLE—(continued)

And bring my ritual to an end  
By giving shelter to a friend.

These done, O dwelling, you become  
Not just a house, but truly Home!

TO AN OLD-FASHIONED POET

(Lizette Woodworth Reese.)

**M**OST tender poet, when the gods confer  
They save your gracile songs a nook apart,  
And bless with Time's untainted lavender  
The ageless April of your singing heart.

You, in an age unbridled, ne'er declined  
The appointed patience that the Muse decrees,  
Until, deep in the flower of the mind  
The hovering words alight, like bridegroom bees.

By casual praise or casual blame unstirred  
The placid gods grant gifts where they belong:  
To you, who understand, the perfect word,  
The recompensed necessities of song.

BURNING LEAVES IN SPRING

WHEN withered leaves are lost in flame  
Their eddying ghosts, a thin blue haze,  
Blow through the thickets whence they came  
On amberlucent autumn days.

The cool green woodland heart receives  
Their dim, dissolving, phantom breath;  
In young hereditary leaves  
They see their happy life-in-death.

My minutes perish as they glow—  
Time burns my crazy bonfire through;  
But ghosts of blackened hours still blow,  
Eternal Beauty, back to you!



THE SAVAGE

CIVILIZATION causes me  
Alternate fits: disgust and glee.

Buried in piles of glass and stone  
My private spirit moves alone,

Where every day from eight to six  
I keep alive by hasty tricks.

But I am simple in my soul;  
My mind is sullen to control.

At dusk I smell the scent of earth,  
And I am dumb—too glad for mirth.

I know the savors night can give,  
And then, and then, I live, I live!

No man is wholly pure and free,  
For that is not his destiny,

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THE SAVAGE—(continued)

But though I bend, I will not break:  
And still be savage, for Truth's sake.

God damns the easily convinced  
(Like Pilate, when his hands he rinsed).

ST. PAUL'S AND WOOLWORTH

I STOOD on the pavement  
Where I could admire  
Behind the brown chapel  
The cream and gold spire.

Above, gilded Lightning  
Swam high on his ball—  
I saw the noon shadow  
The church of St. Paul.

And was there a meaning?  
(My fancy would run),  
Saint Paul in the shadow,  
Saint Frank in the sun!

ADVICE TO A CITY

**O** CITY, cage your poets! Hem them in  
And roof them over from the April sky—  
Clatter them round with babble, ceaseless din,  
And drown their voices with your thunder cry.

Forbid their free feet on the windy hills,  
And harness them to daily ruts of stone—  
(In florists' windows lock the daffodils)  
And never, never let them be alone!

For they are curst, said poets, curst and lewd,  
And freedom gives their tongues uncanny wit,  
And granted silence, thought and solitude  
They (*absit omen!*) might make Song of it.

So cage them in, and stand about them thick,  
And keep them busy with their daily bread;  
And should their eyes seem strange, ah, then be  
quick  
To interrupt them ere the word be said. . . .

For, if their hearts burn with sufficient rage,  
With wasted sunsets and frustrated youth,  
Some day they'll cry, on some disturbing page,  
The savage, sweet, unpalatable truth!

TO LOUISE

(A Christmas Baby, Now One Year Old.)

**U**NDAUNTED by a world of grief,  
You came upon perplexing days,  
And cynics doubt their disbelief  
To see the sky-stains in your gaze.

Your sudden and inclusive smile  
And your emphatic tears, admit  
That you must find this life worth while,  
So eagerly you clutch at it!

Your face of triumph says, brave mite,  
That life is full of love and luck—  
Of blankets to kick off at night,  
And two soft rose-pink thumbs to suck.

O loveliest of pioneers  
Upon this trail of long surprise,  
May all the stages of the years  
Show such enchantment in your eyes!

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HIDE AND SEEK

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TO LOUISE—(continued)

By parents' patient buttonings,  
And endless safety pins, you'll grow  
To ribbons, garters, hooks and things,  
Up to the Ultimate Trousseau—

But never, in your dainty prime,  
Will you be more adored by me  
Than when you see, this Great First Time,  
Lit candles on a Christmas Tree!

*December, 1919.*

THE MUSIC BOX

**A**T SIX—long ere the wintry dawn—  
There sounded through the silent hall  
To where I lay, with blankets drawn  
Above my ears, a plaintive call.

The Urchin, in the eagerness  
Of three years old, could not refrain;  
Awake, he straightway yearned to dress  
And frolic with his clockwork train.

I heard him with a sullen shock.  
His sister, by her usual plan,  
Had piped us aft at 3 o'clock—  
I vowed to quench the little man.

I leaned above him, somewhat stern,  
And spoke, I fear, with emphasis—  
Ah, how much better, parents learn,  
To seal one's censure with a kiss!

Again the house was dark and still,  
Again I lay in slumber's snare,  
When down the hall I heard a trill,  
A tiny, tinkling, tuneful air—

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### THE MUSIC BOX—(continued)

His music-box! His best-loved toy,  
His crib companion every night;  
And now he turned to it for joy  
While waiting for the lagging light.

How clear, and how absurdly sad  
Those tingling pricks of sound unrolled;  
They chirped and quavered, as the lad  
His lonely little heart consoled.

### *Columbia, the Ocean's Gem—*

(Its only tune) shrilled sweet and faint.  
He cranked the chimes, admiring them  
In vigil gay, without complaint.

The treble music piped and stirred,  
The leaping air that was his bliss;  
And, as I most contritely heard,  
I thanked the all-unconscious Swiss!

The needled jets of melody  
Rang slower and died away—  
The Urchin slept; and it was I  
Who lay and waited for the day.



A WEDDED VALENTINE

**D**EAR, may I be your Valentine?  
Not just to-day, in weather fine;  
Not just to-day, in lover's mood,  
But through life's each vicissitude.

Not just when girlish eyes still shine,  
Dear, may I be your Valentine,  
But through all mortal whims and fits  
While Time our human fibres knits.

And though, most sweet, my peevish earth  
Is hardly such promotion worth,  
Dear, may I be your Valentine  
And learn to make your virtue mine?

Recalling by love's old refrain  
Our double joy, divided pain,  
I write this pleading, smiling line—  
*Dear, may I be your Valentine?*

MEDITATION ON SOME BOOKSHELVES  
SHORTLY TO BE BUILT

*Assiduus sis in bibliotheca, quae tibi Paradisi loco est.*

—Erasmus to Bishop Fisher.

**F**RRIEND carpenter, *in re* those shelves of mine,  
It matters little of what wood you build  
them:

Seek out no oak or walnut; common pine,  
Or cypress, will look well when I have filled them.

No doors of glass, or scroll-work done for looks;  
No cornices, no carving, and no beading—  
The ornaments of bookshelves are the books,  
And mine are not for show, but all for reading.

The topmost shelf eight inches, if you please,  
To hold my dumpy twelves and my 16mos;  
The others measured taller by degrees  
For bigger books—like Adams and his keen *mots*.

And now, while all my volumes are still boxed  
And stand about in dreary packing cases,  
I'll think about their pages—clean or foxed—  
And plan just how I'll put them in their places.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### MEDITATION ON BOOKSHELVES—(continued)

My "Everymans"—six feet of varied hue—  
Chatto and Windus' pocket R. L. S.'s—  
The India-paper Boswell, fat and blue,  
A noble bit of work from Oxford's presses.

The small red Shakespeares—Robby Burns's tunes—  
My Bunyan, my "Urn Burial," my Borrow—  
The bright green Lamb (thin paper) made by  
Newnes—  
(I wish those shelves could be done by to-morrow!)

The tiny Omar from Southampton Row  
Tersely inscribed with two sets of initials,  
Which same (the first I gave Her, long ago)  
Brought us at last to City Hall officials.

The Houghton-Mifflin Keats means much to me  
(Bought from John Wanamaker, when a strip-  
ling),  
And Thomas Mosher's grand facsimile  
Of "Leaves of Grass" (the First)—and here's my  
Kipling!

"Vergilii Maronis Opera"

Imprinted 1873 at Leipsic;  
My Goldsmith, stained with tea at Thompson's Spa;  
My Apperson on Smoking, when I'm pipe-sick.

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HIDE AND SEEK

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MEDITATION ON BOOKSHELVES—(continued)

My "Bibelots," "World's Classics," and my "Bohns";  
    (I'd like to see those books again this minute!)  
My Poe, in Baltimore (at Hochschild Kohn's)  
    I got for 19 cents—the mark is in it.

And does my Conrad go up here? He does.  
    And my McFee, whose writing is a strong man's.  
And old Burnand, put out by Roberts Bros.,  
    And De la Mare, with the imprint of Longmans.

I must not start upon this theme again;  
    I will compose my longings unto slumber;  
For Harry Smith says he can't tell just when  
    He'll get that much desiderated lumber.

But when brave Harry comes with wood and paints,  
    And in their nest my bairns are safely brooded,  
I'll number o'er my literary saints,  
    And his good name will surely be included!

RAPID TRANSIT

(To Stephen Vincent Benét.)

CLIMBING is easy and swift on Parnassus!  
Knocking my pipe out, I entered a bookshop;  
There found a book of verse by a young poet.  
Comrades at once, how I saw his mind glowing!  
Saw in his soul its magnificent rioting—  
Then I ran with him on hills that were windy,  
Basked and laughed with him on sun-dazzled beaches,  
Glutted myself on his green and blue twilights,  
Watched him disposing his planets in patterns,  
Tumbling his colors and toys all before him.  
I questioned life with him, his pulses my pulses;  
Doubted his doubts, too, and grieved for his an-  
guishes,  
Salted long kinship and knew him from boyhood—  
Pulled out my own sun and stars from my knapsack,  
Trying my trinkets with those of his finding—  
*And as I left the bookshop*  
*My pipe was still warm in my hand.*

THE VICTORIAN POET  
IN HIS RONDOTAGE

I AM too old to be ensnared  
By formless verse. For I first aired  
My boyish lyre in Dobson's rule,  
And taught myself in that strict school  
To have my stanzas filed and pared.

How hopelessly for rhymes I stared!  
But chipped and polished till I bared  
The finer grain. Discard my tool?  
I am too old.

I vote for verses craftsman-cared—  
Landor'd, Dobson'd, De la Mare'd;  
For rhyme is still the quiet pool  
Where Beauty is reflected. You'll  
Agree (as many have declared)  
I am too old.

CAUGHT IN THE UNDERTOW

**C**OLIN, worshipping some frail,  
By self-deprecation sways her:  
Calls himself unworthy male,  
Hardly even fit to praise her.

But this tactic insincere  
In the upshot greatly grieves him  
When he finds the lovely dear  
Quite implicitly believes him.

SUNDAY NIGHT

**T**WO grave brown eyes, severely bent  
Upon a memorandum book—  
A sparkling face, on which are blent  
A hopeful and a pensive look ;  
A pencil, purse, and book of checks  
With stubs for varying amounts—  
Elaine, the shrewdest of her sex,  
Is busy balancing accounts!

Sedately, in the big armchair,  
She, all engrossed, the audit scans—  
Her pencil hovers here and there  
The while she calculates and plans ;  
What's this? A faintly pensive frown  
Upon her forehead gathers now—  
Ah, does the butcher—heartless clown—  
Beget that shadow on her brow?

A murrain on the tradesman churl  
Who caused this fair accountant's gloom!  
Just then—a baby's cry—my girl  
Arose and swiftly left the room.



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HIDE AND SEEK

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SUNDAY NIGHT—(continued)

Then in her purse by stratagem

I thrust some bills of small amounts—

She'll think she had forgotten them,

And smile again at her accounts!

TO HIS BROWN-EYED MISTRESS

*Who Rallied Him for Praising Blue Eyes in His  
Verses*

**I**F SOMETIMES, in a random phrase  
(For variation in my ditty),  
I chance blue eyes, or gray, to praise  
And seem to intimate them pretty—

It is because I do not dare  
With too unmixed reiteration  
To sing the browner eyes and hair  
That are my true intoxication.

Know, then, that I consider brown  
For ladies' eyes, the only color;  
And deem all other orbs in town  
(Compared to yours), opaquer, duller.

I pray, perpend, my dearest dear;  
While blue-eyed maids the praise were  
drinking,  
How insubstantial was their cheer—  
It was of yours that I was thinking!

PEACE

**W**HAT is this Peace  
That statesmen sign?  
How I have sought  
To make it mine.

Where groaning cities  
Clang and glow  
I hunted, hunted,  
Peace to know.

And still I saw  
Where I passed by  
Discarded hearts,—  
Heard children cry.

By willowed waters  
Brimmed with rain  
I thought to capture  
Peace again.

I sat me down  
My Peace to hoard,  
But Beauty pricked me  
With a sword.

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HIDE AND SEEK

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PEACE—(continued)

For in the stillness  
    Something stirred,  
And I was crippled  
    For a word.

There is no peace  
    A man can find;  
The anguish sits  
    His heart behind.

The eyes he loves,  
    The perfect breast,  
Too exquisite  
    To give him rest.

This is his curse  
    Since brain began.  
His penalty  
    For being man.

MOUNTED POLICE

**W**ATCHFUL, grave, he sits astride his  
horse,

Draped with his rubber poncho, in the rain;  
He speaks the pungent lingo of "The Force,"  
And those who try to bluff him, try in vain.

Inured to every mood of fool and crank,  
Shrewdly and sternly all the crowd he cons:  
The rain drips down his horse's shining flank,  
A figure nobly fit for sculptor's bronze.

O knight commander of our city stress,  
Little you know how picturesque you are!  
We hear you cry to drivers who transgress:  
*"Say, that's a helva place to park your car!"*

SONG, IN DEPRECATION  
OF PULCHRITUDE

**B**EAUTY (so the poets say),  
Thou art joy and solace great;  
Long ago, and far away  
Thou art safe to contemplate,

Beauty. But when now and here,  
Visible and close to touch,  
All too perilously near,  
Thou tormentest us too much!

In a picture, in a song,  
In a novel's conjured scenes,  
Beauty, that's where you belong,  
Where perspective intervenes.

But, my dear, in rosy fact  
Your appeal I have to shirk—  
You disturb me, and distract  
My attention from my work!

ON A WHITE MUSLIN DRESS  
IN A MODISTE'S WINDOW

**D**EMURE white frock which I espy,  
What slender damsel will buy  
This miracle of dainty dress  
And grace it with her loveliness,  
The bliss of every doting eye?

Upon a dummy figure lie  
These tender folds, and seem to sigh  
Some softer bosom to possess,  
Demure white frock!

I can't resist. The price is high,  
But my cigars I will deny;  
I'll get the thing for you, dear Bess,  
And when you wear it, I'll confess  
How utterly entrancing I  
Deem your white frock!

A VALENTINE

**T**O HER whose glamor moves and stirs  
And bids me try to do her honor,  
Whose peerless beauty made me hers  
The first time I laid eyes upon her—  
Whose profile thrilled my boyish dream  
And made a shrine for youthful passion,  
Whose magic is the chosen theme  
Her lovers praise, each in his fashion—  
Who turns her ever-changing face  
To fit the moods that men bring to her,  
And in her heart can find a place  
For all who venturously woo her—  
To her who, beautiful and great,  
Deserves a more pretentious ditty—  
To her, in love, I dedicate  
This Valentine—to New York City!



IN RE ALFRED EMERY CATHIE

(To All Butlerians, but especially Moreby Acklom)

**I**N 1887, Alfred Cathie  
Became the private clerk of Samuel Butler;  
And Butler made a wise choice, for (i'faith!) he  
Could ne'er have found a faithfuller or subtler.  
For Butler, lord of satire and of whim,  
Was not (we guess) the kind of man whom all  
Would understand; but Alfred worshipped him,  
And smiled at his *O God! O Montreal!*

O Cathie, liv'st thou still? Or art thou gone  
*The Way of All Flesh to The Haven Fair?*  
If so, we know that in some *Erewhon*  
Thou find'st thy waggish master waiting there—  
(For he who every mortal foible mocks  
Would ask not Paradise, but Paradox.)  
Cathie, the author of that deathless *mot*:  
"Yes, there's tobacco in it—you may go!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "The Notebooks of Samuel Butler," New Edition, p. 251.

DAFFODILS

**I**F daffodils were merely yellow flowers,  
It would not hurt my heart to see them  
grow—

But ah, they speak to me of April hours  
And gardened mornings now so long ago.

For daffodils are memory and token  
Of vanished days too tender to be sung,  
Before a single happy dream was broken  
In my love's gentle heart when she was young,

TO HIS MISTRESS, DEPLORING THAT  
HE IS NOT AN ELIZABETHAN GALAXY

**W**HY did not Fate to me bequeath an  
Utterance Elizabethan?  
It would have been delight to me  
If *natus ante* 1603.

My stuff would not be soon forgotten  
If I could write like Harry Wotton.

I wish that I could wield the pen  
Like William Drummond of Hawthornden.

I would not fear the ticking clock  
If I were Browne of Tavistock.

For blithe conceits I would not worry  
If I were Raleigh, or the Earl of Surrey.

I wish (I hope I am not silly?)  
That I could juggle words like Lyly.

I envy many a lyric champion,  
I. e., viz., e. g., Thomas Campion.

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HIDE AND SEEK

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TO HIS MISTRESS—(continued)

I creak my rhymes up like a derrick,  
I ne'er will be a Robin Herrick.

My wits are dull as an old Barlow—  
I wish that I were Christopher Marlowe.

In short, I'd like to be Philip Sidney,  
Or some one else of that same kidney.

For if I were, my lady's looks  
And all my lyric special pleading  
Would be in all the future books,  
And called, at college, *Required Reading*.

THE INTRUDER

**A**S I sat, to sift my dreaming  
To the meet and needed word,  
Came a merry Interruption  
With insistence to be heard.

Smiling stood a maid beside me,  
Half alluring and half shy;  
Soft the white hint of her bosom—  
Escapade was in her eye.

“I must not be so invaded,”  
(In an anger then I cried)—  
“Can’t you see that I am busy?  
Tempting creature, stay outside!”

“Pearly rascal, I am writing:  
I am now composing verse—  
Fie on antic invitation:  
Wanton, vanish—fly—disperse!”

“Baggage, in my godlike moment  
What have I to do with thee?”  
And she laughed as she departed—  
“I am Poetry,” said she.

CONFESSIONS IN A HASH-HOUSE

I'M THROUGH!

I Seven years I've worked at this hash counter,

Stooping down five hundred times a day  
To shout down the dumb-waiter to Pete  
(That Polack never pays any attention,  
I can't get a thing I ask for)

And spilling a line of cheerful chatter  
To my customers.

I should think men would get tired of kidding.

Those guys that are so particular,  
Send back their scrambled eggs for another  
three minutes,

Must have their tomatoes on a side dish  
And not on the meat,

Gee, I'll bet when they're home  
They take what comes to them  
And shut up about it.

And I'll bet that the fresh guys  
Who pull the jazz talk day after day  
Have mighty little to say at home.

Men are a bunch of fakers:

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### CONFESSIONS IN A HASH-HOUSE—(continued)

If I ever get one where I want him  
I'll make him behave.  
I'll bean him with a sad-iron.

I'm tired of kidding the bunch.  
I'm tired of listening to their yap about what  
they like  
And what they don't like.  
Just for a change I'd like to see some one  
Come in here and order his lunch and eat it  
Without trying to be funny about it.  
If all this stooping wasn't so good for the figure  
(But, oh, my back, by six P. M.!)  
I'da quit long ago.

Well, girls, I'm through.  
Next week I'm going to marry a fellow,  
And I don't mind telling you, I'm in luck.  
He works in a restrunt on Girard avenue,  
So he won't ever be home to meals.

TIT FOR TAT

**I** OFTEN pass a gracious tree  
Whose name I can't identify,  
But still I bow, in courtesy;  
It waves a bough, in kind reply.

I do not know your name, O tree  
(Are you a hemlock or a pine?)  
But why should that embarrass me?  
Quite probably you don't know mine.



THE TWINS

**C**ON was a thorn to brother Pro—  
On Pro we often sicked him:  
Whatever Pro would claim to know  
Old Con would contradict him!

NURSERY RHYMES FOR THE  
TENDER-HEARTED

(Dedicated to Don Marquis.)

I

**S**CUTTLE, scuttle, little roach—  
How you run when I approach:  
Up above the pantry shelf,  
Hastening to secrete yourself.

Most adventurous of vermin,  
How I wish I could determine  
How you spend your hours of ease,  
Perhaps reclining on the cheese.

Cook has gone, and all is dark—  
Then the kitchen is your park:  
In the garbage heap that she leaves  
Do you browse among the tea leaves?

How delightful to suspect  
All the places you have trekked:  
Does your long antenna whisk its  
Gentle tip across the biscuits?

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### NURSERY RHYMES—(continued)

Do you linger, little soul,  
Drowsing in our sugar bowl?  
Or, abandonment most utter,  
Shake a shimmy on the butter?

Do you chant your simple tunes  
Swimming in the baby's prunes?  
Then, when dawn comes, do you slink  
Homeward to the kitchen sink?

Timid roach, why be so shy?  
We are brothers, thou and I.  
In the midnight, like yourself,  
I explore the pantry shelf!

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### II

**R**OCKABYE, insect, lie low in thy den,  
Father's a cockroach, mother's a hen.  
And Betty, the maid, doesn't clean up the sink,  
So you shall have plenty to eat and to drink.

Hushabye, insect, behind the mince pies:  
If the cook sees you her anger will rise;  
She'll scatter poison, as bitter as gall,  
Death to poor cockroach, hen, baby and all.

### III

**T**HERE was a gay henroach, and what do you  
think,  
She lived in a cranny behind the old sink—  
Eggshells and grease were the chief of her diet;  
She went for a stroll when the kitchen was quiet.

She walked in the pantry and sampled the bread,  
But when she came back her old husband was dead:  
Long had he lived, for his legs they were fast,  
But the kitchen maid caught him and squashed him  
at last.

IV

**I** KNEW a black beetle, who lived down a drain,  
And friendly he was though his manners were  
plain ;

When I took a bath he would come up the pipe,  
And together we'd wash and together we'd wipe.

Though mother would sometimes protest with a sneer  
That my choice of a tub-mate was wanton and queer,  
A nicer companion I never have seen :  
He bathed every night, so he must have been clean.

Whenever he heard the tap splash in the tub  
He'd dash up the drain-pipe and wait for a scrub,  
And often, so fond of ablution was he,  
I'd find him there floating and waiting for me.

But nurse has done something that seems a great  
shame :

She saw him there, waiting, prepared for a game :  
She turned on the hot and she scalded him sore  
And he'll never come bathing with me any more.

THE SUPERMAN

**T**HE man I give toast to  
And praise in this sonnet  
Has never played host to  
A bee in his bonnet.  
Remarkably moderate,  
Thoroughly sane,  
Indeed odd and odder it  
Seems to my brain  
So few are inclined to  
Give heed to his tone,  
But still have a mind to  
Fool views of their own.  
The wisdom of Sinai is his by the shelf . . .  
Of course you divine I—allude to Myself.

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HIDE AND SEEK

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TO A TELEPHONE OPERATOR WHO HAS  
A BAD COLD

**H**OW hoarse and husky in my ear  
Your usually cheerful chirrup:  
You have an awful cold, my dear—  
Try aspirin or bronchial syrup.

When I put in a call to-day  
Compassion stirred my humane blood red  
To hear you faintly, sadly, say  
The number: *Burray Hill dide hudred!*

I felt (I say) quick sympathy  
To hear you croak in the receiver—  
Will you be sorry too for me  
A month hence, when I have hay fever?

MY OWN SPRING SONG

**A**ND now 'tis spring, a lovely scene—  
O poplar trees, long, green, and slender:  
Alas that all this tender green  
Is not a legal tender.



THE URBAN POET

(Requested to supply a spring poem, while his wife,  
who understands these matters, is away from home.)

WHEN reeks the foetid *symplocarp*  
(Or cabbage, frankly known as *skunk*)  
And when the frogs, with pipe and harp,  
Begin to whistle and to plunk,

I think of yellow marigolds  
(They must be yellow, by the name)  
And of the bloodroot that unfolds  
As bright (presumably?) as flame.

Hepaticas, so frail and ——,  
And —— —— —— anemones  
That on this —— —— covered bank  
Are trembling in the gentle breeze.

The saxifrage, clear —— in hue  
(Oh, is it yellow, red or pink?)  
The violet's undoubted blue,  
The Dutchman's Breeches (mauve, I think?)

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### THE URBAN POET—(continued)

The lucid willow by the stream  
With —— —— catkins of soft fur;  
The mountain laurel's —— gleam,  
All these are lovely, I aver.

Dear burdock, blossom of my heart,  
Upon your petals glad I look;  
(I do not know these things apart,  
And got their names out of a book.\*)

Oh, flowery friends of field and wood,  
What pleasure your existence gives. . . .  
And honestly, I wish I could  
Supply the proper adjectives!

\* "Familiar Features of the Roadside," by F. Schuyler Mathews.

MUSINGS ON A COOL RETREAT

I KNOW a little hidden pool  
Where happy bathers oft repair;  
Secluded, clear and deep and cool,  
Men find right brave refreshment there,  
And swiftly doffing shirts and panties  
They revel blissful—*rari nantes*.

Remote from scenes of toil and teen  
All heat and grievance they expunge;  
Enjoying in that shimmering green  
The swift shock of a silver plunge,  
And crying "*O deorum quicquid*  
We thank thee for this pool: *some liquid!*"

Sharp glory of that dive, the first—  
And thrill (but how can it be told?)  
When bodies, slowly falling, burst  
Into the all-encircling cold,  
Then splash, or float among the ripple  
As passive as a participle.

How far away, you will agree,  
Must lie that cool and placid grot—

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### MUSINGS ON A COOL RETREAT—(continued)

Amid the Catskill greenery?

Some distant Adirondack spot?

Yet, if you ask where is the place meant—

The Woolworth Building, in the basement!

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PART TWO: SONNETS

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## SONNETS

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### QUICKENING

**S**UCH little, puny things are words in rhyme:  
Poor feeble loops and strokes as frail as hairs;  
You see them printed here, and mark their chime,  
And turn to your more durable affairs.  
Yet on such petty tools the poet dares  
To run his race with mortar, bricks and lime,  
And draws his frail stick to the point, and stares  
To aim his arrow at the heart of Time.

Intangible, yet pressing, hemming in,  
This measured emptiness engulfs us all,  
And yet he points his paper javelin  
And sees it eddy, waver, turn, and fall,  
And feels, between delight and trouble torn,  
The stirring of a sonnet still unborn.

AT A WINDOW SILL

*TO WRITE a sonnet needs a quiet mind. . . .*  
I paused and pondered, tried again. *To*  
*write. . . .*

Raising the sash, I breathed the winter night:  
Papers and small hot room were left behind.  
Against the gusty purple, ribbed and spined  
With golden slots and vertebræ of light  
Men's cages loomed. Down sliding from a height  
An elevator winked as it declined.

Coward! There is no quiet in the brain—  
If pity burns it not, then beauty will:  
Tinder it is for every blowing spark.  
Uncertain whether this is bliss or pain  
The unresting mind will gaze across the sill  
From high apartment windows, in the dark.



THE RIVER OF LIGHT

I. Broadway, 103rd to 96th.

LIGHTS foam and bubble down the gentle grade:  
Bright shine chop sueys and rôti-series;  
In pink translucence glowingly displayed  
See camisole and stocking and chemise.  
Delicatessen windows full of cheese—  
Above, the chimes of church-bells toll and fade—  
And then, from off some distant Palisade  
That gluey savor on the Jersey breeze!

The burning bulbs, in green and white and red,  
Spell out a *Change of Program Sun., Wed., Fri.*,  
A clicking taxi spins with ruby spark.  
There is a sense of poisoning near the head  
Of some great flume of brightness, flowing by  
To pour in gathering torrent through the dark.

II. Below 96th.

The current quickens, and in golden flow  
Hurries its flotsam downward through the night—  
Here are the rapids where the undertow  
Whirls endless motors in a gleaming flight.  
From blazing tributaries, left and right,  
Influent streams of blue and amber grow.  
Columbus Circle eddies: all below  
Is pouring flame, a gorge of broken light.

See how the burning river boils in spate,  
Channeled by cliffs of insane jewelry,  
Painting a rosy roof on cloudy air—  
And just about ten minutes after eight,  
Tossing a surf of color to the sky  
It bursts in cataracts upon Times Square!

IN AN AUCTION ROOM

(*Letter of John Keats to Fanny Brawne, Anderson Galleries, March 15, 1920.*)

To Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach.

*HOW* about this lot? said the auctioneer;  
*One hundred, may I say, just for a start?*  
Between the plum-red curtains, drawn apart,  
A written sheet was held. . . . And strange to hear  
(Dealer, would I were steadfast as thou art)  
The cold quick bids. (*Against you in the rear!*)  
The crimson salon, in a glow more clear  
Burned bloodlike purple as the poet's heart.

Song that outgrew the singer! Bitter Love  
That broke the proud hot heart it held in thrall—  
Poor script, where still those tragic passions  
move—

*Eight hundred bid: fair warning: the last call:*  
The soul of Adonais, like a star. . . .  
*Sold for eight hundred dollars—Doctor R.!*

EPITAPH FOR A POET WHO WROTE NO  
POETRY

“It is said that a poet has died young in the breast  
of the most stolid.”—Robert Louis Stevenson.

**W**HAT was the service of this poet? He  
Who blinked the blinding dazzle-rays that  
run

Where life profiles its edges to the sun,  
And still suspected much he could not see.  
Clay-stopped, yet in his taciturnity  
There lay the vein of glory, known to none;  
And moods of secret smiling, only won  
When peace and passion, time and sense, agree.

Fighting the world he loved for chance to brood,  
Ignorant when to embrace, when to avoid  
His loves that held him in their vital clutch—  
This was his service, his beatitude;  
This was the inward trouble he enjoyed  
Who knew so little, and who felt so much.

TO A VAUDEVILLE TERRIER  
SEEN ON A LEASH, IN THE PARK

**T**HREE times a day—at two, at seven, at nine—  
O terrier, you play your little part:  
Absurd in coat and skirt you push a cart,  
With inner anguish walk a tight-rope line.  
Up there, before the hot and dazzling shine  
You must be rigid servant of your art,  
Nor watch those fluffy cats—your doggish heart  
Might leap and then betray you with a whine!

But sometimes, when you've faithfully rehearsed,  
Your trainer takes you walking in the park,  
Straining to sniff the grass, to chase a frog.  
The leash is slipped, and then your joy will burst—  
Adorable it is to run and bark,  
To be—alas, how seldom—just a dog!

TO A BURLESQUE SOUBRETTE

UPSTAGE the great high-shafted beefy choir  
Squawked in 2000 watts of orange glare—  
You came, and impudent and deuce-may-care  
Danced where the gutter flamed with footlight fire.

Flung from the roof, spots red and yellow burned  
And followed you. The blatant brassy clang  
Of instruments drowned out the words you sang,  
But goldenly you capered, twirled and turned.

Boyish and slender, child-limbed, quick and proud,  
A sprite of irresistible disdain,  
Fair as a jonquil in an April rain,  
You seemed too sweet an imp for that dull crowd. . . .

And then, behind the scenes, I heard you say,  
“O Gawd, I got a hellish cold to-day!”

SONNETS OF A GEOMETER

THE CIRCLE

**F**EW things are perfect: we bear Eden's scar;  
Yet faulty man was godlike in design  
That day when first, with stick and length of twine,  
He drew me on the sand. Then what could mar  
His joy in that obedient mystic line;  
And then, computing with a zeal divine,  
He called  $\pi$  3-point-14159  
And knew my lovely circuit  $2 \pi r$ !

A circle is a happy thing to be—  
Think how the joyful perpendicular  
Erected at the kiss of tangency  
Must meet my central point, my avatar!  
They talk of 14 points: yet only 3  
Determine every circle: Q. E. D.

SONNETS IN TIME OF TRIAL

(See *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act I, Scene 5,  
lines 35-36.)

I

QUEER! there was no premonitory twitch,  
No twangling of my nerves, to advertise  
All you would mean to me: contrariwise,  
Full-blown your passion seized me: passion which  
Made our relation so supremely rich  
In yearning, wild remorse, and surprise.  
And yet I uttered hardly any cries  
When Pain danced tiptoe in her pallid niche.

O bitter my immedicable woe—  
And must I lose you? Ah, I could not tell!  
Chimerical seemed life and love and youth.  
I never knew that I could suffer so  
Until I ate that chocolate caramel  
And throbbed with you, O sorely stricken tooth!



II

I felt that crumbling, teetering thrill again:  
Life was a nausea, earth a black disgrace;  
The sunlight was offensive to my face;  
Man, made of mud, and conduited for pain.  
I longed to probe through tissue, nerve and vein  
And with some thin, sharp instrument to chase  
This lurking fiend of torment from his place  
And free the devil tugging at his chain.

A shaking, shuddering pang, and I was shent;  
It seemed to split my skull, without a warning;  
I thought: I hope I'll soon be dead, by Jove!  
I took my hat and stick, and out I went.  
The druggist, as I bought some oil of clove,  
Said, "What a jolly, sunny Sunday morning!"

TO AN OLD FRIEND

(For Lloyd Williams.)

I LIKE to dream of some established spot  
Where you and I, old friend, an evening through  
Under tobacco's fog, streaked gray and blue,  
Might reconsider laughters unforgot.  
Beside a hearth-glow, golden-clear and hot,  
I'd hear you tell the oddities men do.  
The clock would tick, and we would sit, we two—  
Life holds such meetings for us, does it not?

Happy are men when they have learned to prize  
The sure unvarnished virtue of their friends,  
The unchanged kindness of a well-known face:  
On old fidelities our world depends,  
And runs a simple course in honest wise,  
Not a mere taxicab shot wild through space!

THOUGHTS WHILE PACKING A TRUNK

**T**HE sonnet is a trunk, and you must pack  
With care, to ship frail baggage far away;  
The octet is the trunk; sestet, the tray;  
Tight, but not overloaded, is the knack.  
First, at the bottom, heavy thoughts you stack,  
And in the chinks your adjectives you lay—  
Your phrases, folded neatly as you may,  
Stowing a syllable in every crack.

Then, in the tray, your daintier stuff is hid:  
The tender quatrain where your moral sings—  
Be careful, though, lest as you close the lid  
You crush and crumple all these fragile things.  
Your couplet snaps the hasps and turns the key—  
Ship to The Editor, marked C. O. D.

THE TWO-MAN SAW

The rocking, ringing steel sings to and fro,  
A steady buzz, a whang and rasp and hiss;  
The sawdust spurts and makes twin piles below;  
Green wood is tough.

The art is chiefly this:  
Don't bear too hard, but leave it to the saw,  
(Sam holds the other end, and knows the knack);  
Pull firmly, but still lightly, on the draw,  
But do not push. Your partner takes it back.

Then, when your rhythm's easy, going well,  
And back-arm muscles twinge a bit, mayhap,  
Swayed in a kind of dogged swoon, you'll smell  
That lusty savor of hot sun on sap.

"Well, Sam, your saw, she swings a wicked  
tooth." . . .

The trunk is through. Sam grins. "You said the  
truth!"

A SONNET ON OYSTERS

(Dedicated to Grif Alexander, in honor of a barrel that came from Green Holly Creek, Patuxent River, Maryland.)

**T**O tell the truth, I really never knew  
What oysters were, until, one night this week,  
A barrel came up from Green Holly Creek  
And Grif set up a supper for the crew.  
First, on the shell, most glorious to view,  
Their little sacks, distent and soft and sleek,  
Dribbled with acid lemon-juice, and eke  
Bill's home-made ketchup. . . . And then came the  
stew!

A stew, I say, since rhyme must needs be sung,  
Though, to be factual, the 'valves were panned—  
And then, the Colonel's gorgeous bowl of punch.  
O zesty broth, serene upon the tongue,  
And ginger cookies, baked by Jim's wife's hand,  
The night Grif broached that barrel for the bunch!

IN PHILADELPHIA

I

I HAVE seen sunsets gild the pillared steam  
Where Broad Street Station hoops with arches  
dark

The western fire; and seen the looming, stark  
Crags of the Hall grow soft in morning gleam.

One drowsy eve I wandered far to mark  
The Neck, a land of opal color-scheme;  
And know no fairer place to watch and dream  
Than on a bench in old Penn Treaty Park.

And there are corners, glimpses, houses, streets,  
With curious satisfaction in the view,  
And unconfessed sweet moments when one meets  
The destiny of human life anew.  
A city rarely beautiful I know . . . .  
It is not men alone who make it so.

II

I have seen streets where strange enchantment broods :  
Old ruddy houses where the morning shone  
In seemly quiet on their tranquil moods ,  
Across the sills white curtains outward blown.  
Their marble steps were scoured as white as bone  
Where scrubbing housemaids toiled on wounded  
knee—

And yet, among all streets that I have known  
These placid byways give least peace to me.

In such a house, where green light shining through  
(From some back garden) framed her silhouette  
I saw a girl, heard music blithely sung.  
She stood there laughing in a dress of blue,  
And as I went on, slowly, there I met  
An old, old woman, who had once been young.

TO MY WIFE

**W**HO else, dear eyes of brown, could know or  
dream

Our thousand foolish tender little ways?  
Absurdities and trifles though they seem,

They are the salt and savor of our days!  
They are too quaint and too ridiculous

To name them here, or publicly explain;  
For what is deep significance to us

Would, to the general, prove quite insane!  
And I, who must be prim ten hours a day

And talk choplogic, and seem wise, severe—  
How blithely do I cast pretence away

And whisper sheerest moonshine in your ear!  
Your laughter is so sweet, it strikes me dumb  
To think how suddenly life's partings come.



HOSTAGES

“He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune.”—BACON.

**A**YE, Fortune, thou hast hostage of my best!  
I, that was once so heedless of thy frown,  
Have armed thee cap-à-pie to strike me down,  
Have given thee blades to hold against my breast.  
My virtue, that was once all self-possessed,  
Is parceled out in little hands, and brown  
Bright eyes, and in a sleeping baby's gown:  
To threaten these will put me to the test.

Sure, since there are these pitiful poor chinks  
Upon the makeshift armor of my heart,  
For thee no honor lies in such a fight!  
And thou wouldst shame to vanquish one, methinks,  
Who came awake with such a painful start  
To hear the coughing of a child at night!



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PART THREE: TRANSLATIONS FROM  
THE CHINESE

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TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

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DEDICATED  
WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION  
TO  
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

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## TRANSLATIONS FROM THE CHINESE

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### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

It is with some reluctance that I accede to the publisher's entreaties to put these translations before the world of polite letters. I am painfully aware that my knowledge of Chinese is rather rudimentary, based as it is largely on laundry slips. I cannot help having a suspicion that there are a good many of the 40,000 ideographs with which I am not sufficiently familiar. But my readers will sympathize when they realize the difficulties of the task which I have set myself. It is disconcerting, when spending an evening translating the pearly and beautifully chiselled epigrams of No Sho or P'ur Fish, to find that the character which I thought (by comparison with my collection of laundry slips) must mean *a pair of pyjamas*, would, if so translated, give a regrettably intimate and informal tone to the verse. It is true that relying entirely on this laundry slip glossary somewhat restricts the scope of my translations; and therefore I have not scrupled to do as other devotees of Chinese verse, and when in doubt as to the exact meaning of a phrase I have always translated it *a bowl of jade filled with the milk of the moonlight*.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE—(continued)

Most interesting of all, it will be agreed, is the fact that the translations establish beyond cavil that the authors of these poems are men very much like ourselves. Most of the Chinese poetry that has been translated is of a querulous or bibbing sort: it gives an unfair picture of a high-spirited and proud race, representing them as eternally moaning about maidens with finger-nails shaped like filberts, lotus leaves in the moon-shine, and death by excess of wine. The Chinese poets I here introduce have not been taken up by the poetical coteries, because they are of the more familiar sort; they are the humorists of China, the Chinese colyumists as it were.

Any proceeds from the sale of these translations will be applied to increasing and codifying my collection of laundry slips.

THE TRANSLATOR.

NO SHO

In my translations from No Sho I have tried, though clumsily, to express something of the brooding bitterness that pervades his work. For a long time he was a sort of private colyumist to an eminent mandarin of the P'un dynasty. It was his duty to write, every day, a number of paragraphs, epigrams, wheezes, and ditties, and bring them in the afternoon to his patron's tea house. Here he would read them aloud to the mandarin and his guests as they sat at their wine and watermelon seeds. After each item was read, there would be a little music on the Chinese zither, and the assembled company would discuss the possibility of No Sho's work being taken up by Miss Amy Lowell or Mr. Witter Bynner. One day, however, in a fit of pique because the audience did not sufficiently applaud one of his apothegms, No Sho leaped out of the tea-house into the lake. He did not really intend to destroy himself, but only to give his employer a fright, thinking thereby to get his salary raised; but the water lilies (which are so frequently described in Chinese poetry), were very thick in that pond, and their stems got entwined round his neck, and he perished. It was obvious that his death was not suicide, for he had carefully laid his manuscripts on a bench before jumping, and after the excitement (and the poet) had subsided it was found that among the papers was

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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NO SHO—(continued)

a stamped addressed envelope directed to Lady Editor, Well Known Pottry Magazine, Chicago. In spite of the utmost efforts of Mr. Burleson, it was not possible to find out who was meant by this; and No Sho's manuscripts were at last sold by the Dead Letter Office; in which way they came to my hands.

### SILHOUETTE OF A HUSBAND

**L**ADIES classify husbands  
Into two classes:  
Those who are "attentive,"  
And those who are not.  
I fear I am of the latter,  
For I never can remember  
My home telephone number.

But my friend Chang Jo  
Always knows his home number.  
He calls up so often to say  
"My dear,  
I will not be home to dinner this evening."



A BURNING BOSOM

**S**ITTING in this tea-house,  
Looking out on the clear cool water  
And the silver lilies,  
How I wish I could press a dripping lily-pad  
On my burning bosom  
To ease me of my smart.  
A broken heart, you ask, Mar Quong?  
No, no, a mustard plaster.

INGRATITUDE

**B**EARING Walt Whitman in mind,  
I intend to save  
On my deathbed:  
“I regard my poems as  
My *carte de visite*  
To posterity.”  
It is sad to have to add  
That posterity will reply  
“Not at home.”

PRUDENCE

**H**ELP! *Mad dog!* cried some one.  
Wisdom, I murmured,  
Is better than rabies,  
And hastened  
In the opposite direction.

SAFE AND SANE

**M**Y theology, briefly,  
Is that the Universe  
Was Dictated  
But not Signed.

LEGES SINE MORIBUS VANAE

**T**HE Ten Commandments  
Are not really commandments,  
But they are valuable  
Suggestions.

RECIPROCATION

**O**NE good nocturne  
Deserves another,  
Said George Sand  
When she met Chopin.

AN EJACULATION

**G**ENIUS, cried the commuter.  
As he ran for the 8.13,  
Consists of an infinite capacity  
For catching trains.

PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING

Six o'Clock

**W**HEN the frogs clear their throats  
Like old club members,  
And the fireflies  
Punctuate the dusk with a network of bright-  
ness,  
Hasten, boy, to His Excellency Mu-Kow,  
And ask him to join me  
In a trifling merriment.  
And be careful  
To stretch two white ropes  
Along the path,  
Lest, when His Excellency totters homeward in  
the darkness,  
He fall in the canal.

Eight o'Clock

Welcome, Excellency, welcome!  
You do me too much honor!  
Lay aside your robe and we will sit in the pa-  
goda.  
Throw your lip over these pickled sharks' fins.  
I pray you, be at your ease:

PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING—(continued)

Let this evening be conducted on a high philosophical plane.

The great Confucius, as you were saying, put it neatly:

*Prohibition cannot harm me,  
I have wined to-day.*

Nine o'Clock

Yes, Excellency, you have said it:

We live but once.

Boy! Some more of those curried snails!

How warm this moonlight is.

By all means, Excellency, take off your shirt  
If you will be more comfortable.

Ten o'Clock

Admirable, admirable!

To speak sooth, Excellency, I had no idea  
That you could do the Shan-Tung saraband  
with such spirit.

But—you will pardon me for mentioning it—

Let me clear away the broken glassware  
Before you dance barefoot on the table.

The Emperor would never forgive me

If you should wound yourself—

Yes, I can see you perfectly from here.

It is very comfortable here, under the table.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### PANORAMA OF A HAPPY EVENING—(continued)

Eleven o'Clock

Boy, boy! Make haste!  
I *begged* His Excellency to tread with care.  
Woe is me! His Excellency insisted on catch-  
ing a cool, slippery eel  
To lay against his heated forehead.  
Hasten, boy, hasten!  
His Excellency  
Has fallen into the canal.

### CERTAINTY

**H**OW is it that human beings  
Are so certain of everything?  
Every man will tell you, fiercely,  
That he has bought far more lunches  
For other men  
Than have been bought for him.  
And yet, mathematically,  
That cannot be so.

CONFESSION

**W**HENEVER I meet a handsome man  
I have an irresistible impulse  
To look at the nearest mirror  
The most satisfying form of art  
Is contrast.

ONE OF MANY

**T**HE man who told me  
He invented indirect lighting  
Was a liar.  
How about the moon?

HANDICAPPED

**L**IFE is a game of whist  
Between Man and Nature  
In which Nature knows all Man's cards.  
Well, suppose I try you out on trumps,  
Says Nature,  
Leading the mating instinct.

THE CODE

**T**HOSE fireflies sparkling in the willows,  
Here, there, here, there;  
Those frogs piping in the moonlit pond,  
Tweedle, tweedle, tweedle—  
There seems to be a persistent method in it.  
What is the code?  
Is Nature trying to get across some message to me?

THE POINT OF VIEW

**W**HEN the birch tree was cut down  
The birds came and sat on the trunk  
And gossiped.  
In this tree I found the largest caterpillar I ever  
ate,  
Said the robin.  
In this tree I met my first wife,  
Said the wren.



## THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

**O**NE of the penalties  
Of being a human being  
Is  
Other human beings.

## ADVICE

**N**EVER try to tell people anything  
Unless  
They know it already.  
Even then,  
It is well to refrain.

## FALSE COLORS

**D**O not be alarmed by the truculence  
Of my poems.  
I myself am timid, dilatory,  
Fond of plenty of gravy,  
And I hate liquor.  
My motto is, the velvet hand  
In the iron glove.

WHILE IN THE MOOD

**I**F there is any kind of poetry  
I haven't written,  
You might tell me about it,  
And I'll do some.

P'UR FISH

This great poet, who is known to us only by his nickname (given him by his contemporaries because he insisted on writing in rhyme, when most Chinese poetry, as is well known, is in free verse), perished in the Bolshevik massacres during the P'un dynasty. He was a Mandarin of the old school, and his *Critique of Pure Treason* enraged the republicans of that day. He amused himself by poking fun at the other poets of his time, particularly those who gathered in societies and sodalities and sororities for the purpose of admiring one another's trifles. This was very nearly fatal to his fame. Only the pungent and terse wit of his verses has kept them alive.

TO THE BROWNING SOCIETY OF  
SHANGHAI

**B**E cruel to poets, and don't let them think  
You like their preposterous patterns in ink;  
For poets write better when not overfed:  
The time to praise poets is after they're dead.

POETS EASILY CONSOLED

**T**HE anguishes of poets are  
Less grim than other men's, by far:  
When other men can only curse,  
The poet puts his woes in verse.  
And Yee Lee, though at first the pang was smart  
When by his friend Wu Wu his bride was stolen,  
Soon asked which best expressed a broken heart,  
A dash, a comma, or a semi-colon?

AN ARISTOCRAT OF THE P'UN DYNASTY

**J**UST as the beheading was all ready to begin,  
"What was *your* offence?" they asked the an-  
cient mandarin.

The mandarin smiled grimly, as on his knees he sank  
"My offence?" he whispered: "Ah, my offence is—  
rank."

THE ASTRONOMER TO HIS MISTRESS

**T**HOU art my earth, and I thy moon,  
In orbit ever true to thee:  
O grant thy planet may come soon  
To his ecstatic perigee.

AUTUMN COLORS

**H**OW tedious it seems, and strange,  
That poets should be raving still  
Of autumn tints: it's just the change  
From chlorophyll to xanthophyll.

PO LIL CHILE

Po Lil Chile is one of the few female poets of China. In regard to poetry the position of women in the Flowery Republic is very different from the status of lady poets in our own dear country. In fact, it is considered positively unseemly for ladies to publish their verses, and Miss Chile's suitor, Woof Woof, broke off the engagement when her volume *Chinese Chintzes* appeared. It is rather pathetic that Miss Chile, in many of her verses, represents herself as a married lady; this, shrewd commentators have said, shows how deeply she deplored that her Art (which she always spells with a capital), has sundered her from the happiness of domestic 'normalcy.' Other critics have said that this is purely cynical on her part; and that she knew very well that a Broken Heart was the first and most essential asset of a female poet.

THE PIPE OF PEACE

WHAT is the magic  
Of a corncob pipe?  
No matter how peevish or irritable  
My husband may be,

THE PIPE OF PEACE—(continued)

When he is smoking his Missouri meerschaum  
He will do anything I ask.  
Couldn't something about corncob pipes  
Be put in  
The marriage ceremony?

SHELF DECEPTION

**O**N virtue all my soul is bent,  
For though to err is surely human,  
Some day (quite soon) I will repent,  
Return the books that I've been lent,  
And make myself an honest woman.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### SAI WEN

Through no fault of his own, Sai Wen's life was marred by tragedy. While a credulous small boy he happened to read a history of the United States, such as is used in American schools. This had carelessly been left lying about by a missionary. One chapter of this volume was called "The Gospel of Americanism," and it inflamed the youth's imagination to such an extent that he conceived the notion that the United States was the only truly happy, virtuous, comfortable and idealistic country on earth. He immediately subscribed to a number of memory, will-power and Chautauqua reading courses, and made haste to come to America. Alas, his disillusion was painful and prompt. One evening he strayed into the New York subway at the rush hour. The next day he returned to his native land, asserting that he was 100 per cent, Chinese. He is now the leader of the Damyurize party in China, which hopes to pass legislation excluding all Americans from that happy country.

### IN A VISITORS' BOOK

**M**Y favorite kind of scenery  
Is brown eyes;  
My chosen form of endeavor  
Is peeling the froth  
From the top of the tankard.



FRUSTRATION

**A** MAN I knew by sight  
And also by hearing  
Said, "I have a good story  
For you."  
After I got around the corner  
I thought what I should have said:  
"That is not a story,  
It is an heirloom."  
I hurried after him,  
But he was gone.

DENY YOURSELF

**I**F you haven't any ideas  
Don't worry.  
You can get along without them—  
Many of the nicest people do.

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## HIDE AND SEEK

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### REFLECTION

**W**OMEN use shop windows to look through,  
Admiring the goods displayed.  
Men use them to look at,  
Finding them agreeable  
As mirrors.

### THOUGHT ON CONVERSING WITH A PROMINENT STATESMAN

**I**T is all right for a man  
To be absent-minded,  
But his mind shouldn't overstay  
Its leave of absence.

### QUERY

**W**HO can alleviate  
The joy of a social worker  
Alleviating  
The sorrows of the poor?

ACID EJACULATION

**I**T is always those  
To whom you are kindest  
Who anoint your heels  
With banana peel.

CHU PEP-SIN

This hitherto unknown satirist is said to have been a prince of Tartar blood. He came to the United States in the guise of a Chinese laundryman, and in that humble capacity became a shrewd observer of certain phases of American life. After some years in Philadelphia he returned to China. Some of his comments on American civilization are regrettably acid. We have chosen only the milder accents of his muse for quotation here.

THE POWER HOUSE

**E**VERY day I go past  
The power house on Ludlow Street.  
I look in the open windows  
And see the great dynamos on their shelves.  
They have power enough  
To jazz the earth  
And throw the planets out of step,  
But they make no sound.

THE POWER HOUSE—(continued)

I saw a girl with shell goggles  
Dusting some of them, unterrified  
By her proximity  
To such dangerous engines.  
Look out, child, *look out!*  
Don't get too near the Bernard Shaw circuit-  
breaker  
Or the Walt Whitman flywheel!

ON A PAIR OF SPATS LAID AWAY FOR THE  
SUMMER

**L**ITTLE spats,  
Down among the summer mothballs  
Do you hanker for the time  
When you will once more  
Encase her bright ankles  
As they glimmer up and down  
Chestnut street?  
Your gain will be our loss,  
But don't be dogs in the manger,  
Little spats!

THIS INCONSTANCY IS SUCH

CHESTNUT STREET is dark and gloomy  
11:30 p. m.

But from an upper window  
Comes the insane ecstasy of jazz.  
Cling-cling of little bells,  
Rattle of drums,  
Tick-tock of the gourds,  
Crash of cymbals,  
Wail of violins on the placid night.  
Life is tragic;  
Life is damnable;  
But I do a little scamper of my own  
There on the pavement.

POVERTY

POVERTY is always pathetic!

I passed the house of a certain poor man  
And looking through the window I saw  
Persian rugs, crystal chandeliers, a mahogany talk-  
ing machine,  
Cut-glass bonbon dish, pearl-inlaid tables, porce-  
lain bric-a-brac,  
Platinum ash trays, silver toothpick vase, morocco  
bound telephone directory,

POVERTY—(continued)

Gold-plated peanut sheller, electric Pomeranian dog-  
washer,

And not a single book.

Is there no charitable organization

To help this poor pauper?

### MISDIRECTED ZEAL

**W**HEN I am at work in the office  
A kind of palsy seizes on my soul.  
I feel the whole weight of the universe  
Crushing down on my defenseless spirit;  
But when I get home at night  
And it is time to go to bed,  
I am as brisk as a ticket seller  
In the box office of a vaudeville show.  
In the sheer lustihood of my exuberance  
I rearrange all the bottles in the medicine closet,  
And with the zeal of Russell Conwell  
Delivering "Acres of Diamonds" for the 5000th  
time,  
I have been known to pursue a cockroach  
From one end of the apartment to the other.

FRUSTRATION

**I** HAVE given up bathing.  
The doctor told me to go down to Atlantic City  
And snuff up the salt water.  
He said it would be good for hay fever.  
But every time I wade out to the breakers  
And dip my head under the water  
A life guard dashes at me  
And drags me in.  
The next day I see my name in the paper—  
“Saved From the Surf,”  
And the life insurance company  
Threatens to cancel my policy.

ON WATCHING MY STENOGRAPHER

**I**F only the mechanism of society  
Were as simple as a typewriter,  
And the management of affairs  
Could be transposed  
From Capital to Lower Case  
By pressing a shift key!



A PLACID DISPOSITION

**I** CAN always keep my temper  
When I'm alone.  
It's only other folks  
That rile me.

A DISCOVERY

**T**HE worst moment  
In my life  
Is when I am cleaning up the cellar  
And find my magenta tie,  
Three frayed soft collars,  
And the dear old brown pair of trousers  
In the trash-box  
Where my wife put them.

BREAKING THE RULES

**I** KNOW a merchant  
Who is an offence to all Rotarians.  
He began business on a shoestring,  
And yet he is not successful.

O B' OI

Little is known of the life of O B'oi, who was a timid recluse, much persecuted by the authorities for his satirical volume entitled *The Confusions of Confucius*. It is said that at one time he was a colyumist on a newspaper in Shanghai, but was dismissed for telling his employer that 20 taels per annum was but a niggardly wage. He was the Kant of China.

THOUGHTS OF A MIDDLE-AGED  
MANDARIN

**B**REAKING in a new idea  
Is like breaking in a new pipe:  
Uncomfortable work.  
I like the old familiar thoughts,  
No bite or parch.

BUDDHIST LULLABY

**M**Y mind is an apartment.  
When it is all dark,  
And I am about to sleep,  
Who is that walking  
On the floor overhead?

THE REELING BRAIN

**M**Y mind is a movie film.  
Who the camera man was,  
I don't know,  
But he certainly shot  
Some queer pictures.  
I always fear  
That some day the film will snap  
And the audience  
Will applaud ironically.

CONFUCIUS CONFUSED

**I**'VE been taking dictation  
From the universe  
For quite a while.  
I've got a bunch of notes:  
Now it's time to transcribe them.  
Queer—  
I can't seem  
To make sense out of them.

CAUTION

**M**Y mind needs no fire escape.  
It is equipped with automatic sprink-  
lers.

As soon as an idea catches fire  
They put it out.  
I am heavily insured against  
Inflammatory notions.

STEAM SHOVEL NEEDED

**M**Y mind is like the Panama Canal.  
Great ocean-going ideas  
Lie moored in the locks  
Until my thought rises to the level  
Where they can proceed.  
Every now and then  
There is a brainslide in the Culebra Cut  
And all traffic is halted.

NEAP PLUS ULTRA

**M**Y mind is like the ocean.  
My friends are children playing on the  
beach.

They bring their little tin buckets  
And make patterns on the sand.  
Once a strong swimmer ventured out  
As far as the breakers.  
He turned back.  
He was afraid of the undertow.

ANNOUNCEMENT

**M**Y mind is closed pending repairs.  
After alterations are completed,  
Will reopen in these premises  
With a large line of plain and fancy goods.

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